

# Far from the madding crowd

By Judith Montminy  
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

**D**UXBURY — He thinks funny. He writes funny. He directs funny. Yet beyond the Hollywood zany guy hype, Peter Farrelly is not your typical funny guy.

At his turn-of-the-century Powder Point home overlooking Duxbury Bay, the man who wrote and directed the slapstick comedy hit "Dumb and Dumber" with his

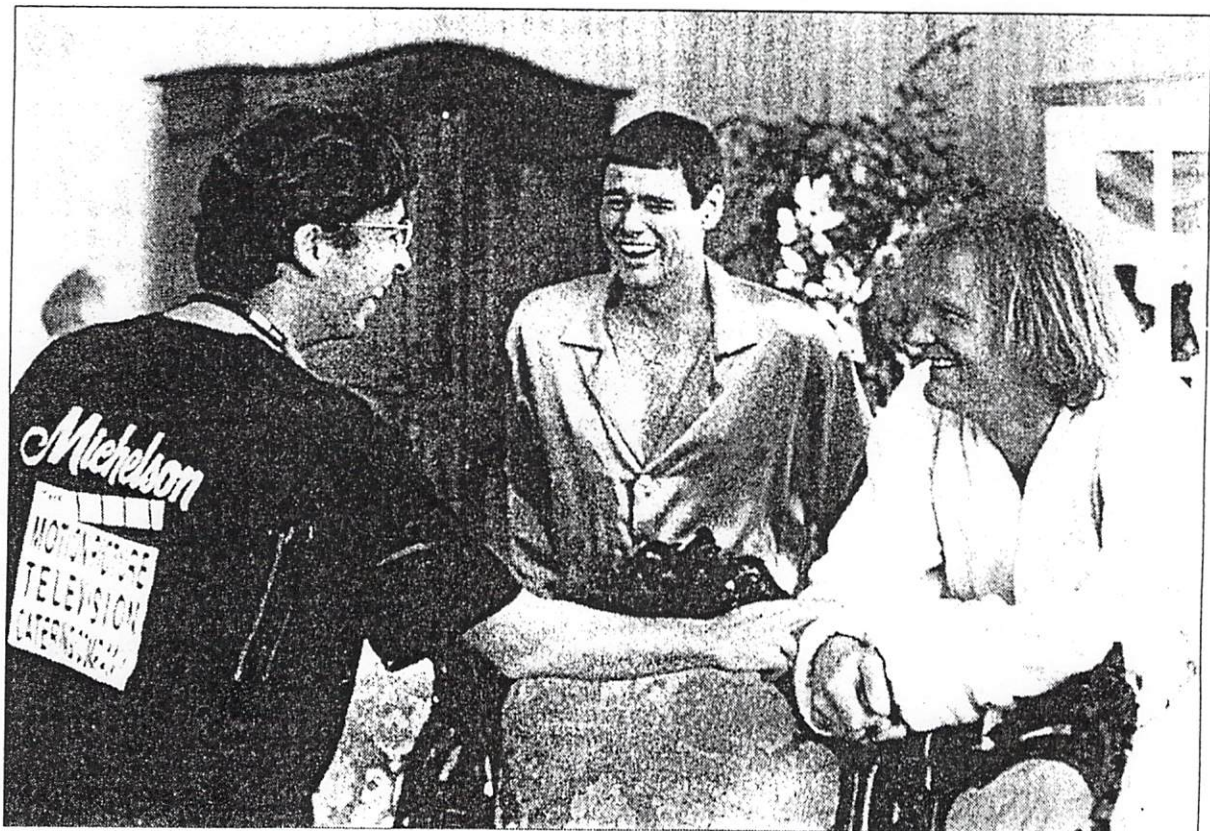
## Hollywood film writer, director Peter Farrelly lives in Duxbury

brother Bobby Farrelly (who also lives in Duxbury) says he never was the class clown or the type to come up with side-splitting one-liners on the spot.

"I'm about 10 minutes behind everyone else, but when I come up

with a line, it's good," said Farrelly, 41. "[Comedy writers] are funny in retrospect. They're the guys who will think of the good line on the way home. When somebody says something, they don't come back with the flashy one liner, but while lying in bed they're thinking, 'God, I could have said this, or I could have said this.'"

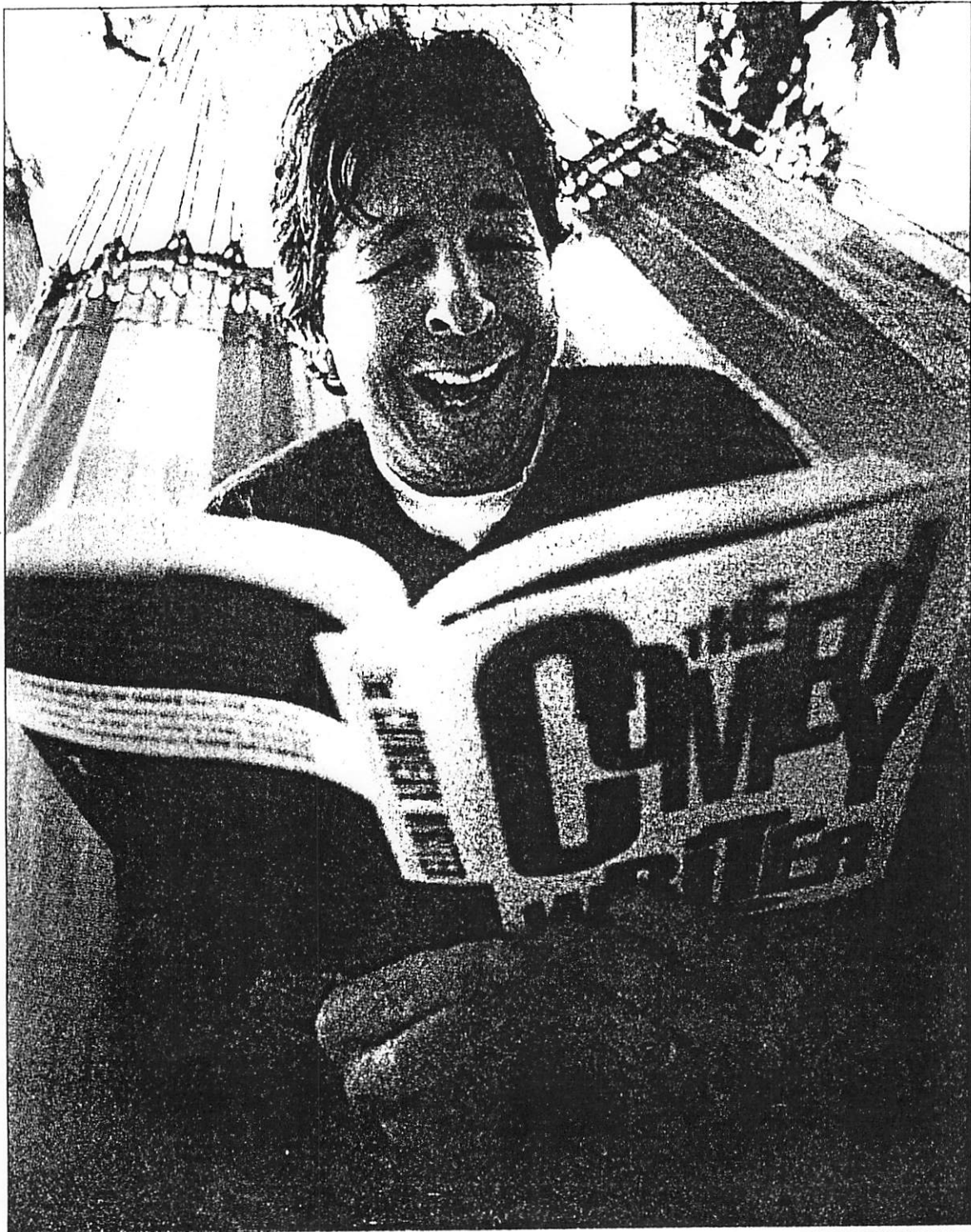
In his newly published second novel, "The Comedy Writer," Farrelly gives readers a glimpse into that creative process as he follows  
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On the set of "Dumb and Dumber," (from left) Peter Farrelly shares a laugh with Jim Carrey and Jeff Daniels.

*'I just thought [Duxbury] was the most beautiful town I had ever seen. . . . It's also a way to protect ourselves from losing touch with Joe Schmo. Not that Duxbury is exactly roughing it.'*

PETER FARRELLY, Hollywood screenwriter and director



GLOBE PHOTO / KERRY BRETT

Peter Farrelly laughs over some material in his recently published second novel, "The Comedy Writer."



## BETWEEN TAKES

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Actor and Greenbay Packers' quarterback Brett Favre is flanked by "There's Something About Mary" co-directors Peter (left) and Bobby Farrelly at daily rushes.

PHOTO / ERNIE MALLICK



Actress Cameron Diaz peeks over the shoulders of Peter (left) and Bobby Farrelly on the "Mary" set.

PHOTO / GLENN WATSON

## ■ FARRELLY

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the exploits of a fledgling writer trying to make it in Hollywood.

"It is a story about a guy who is trying to find himself," Farrelly said, allowing that the book also is a cautionary tale, since it gives readers an insider's view of the film business, warts and all.

Farrelly wrote the novel, published by Doubleday, over a period of 10 years, "in between" the 15 screenplays he and his brother wrote before getting their big break in 1994, when they got to direct their film "Dumb and Dumber."

"I wrote ['The Comedy Writer'] on vacation and when I was relaxing at home," Farrelly said. "It was my respite from the movies."

Although the book is semi-autobiographical and the encounters with actors such as Geena Davis actually happened to Farrelly and are recounted verbatim, he said the darker parts of the book are pure fiction.

Happily for Farrelly and his brother, they have had an easier time than the book's protagonist.

When they were starting out, Farrelly said, he and his brother were taken under the wing of David and Jerry Zucker, the brothers who wrote and directed "Airplane!" and "Naked Gun," among other broad comedies.

"I was lucky," Farrelly said. "I hustled into the business because the Zucker brothers got me in the door, and they're the nicest guys you can meet in L.A."

Nice guys are important to Farrelly - himself a good-natured, family-oriented, down-to-earth bloke - who lives in Duxbury, he says, because he wants a normal life away from the film biz in Hollywood.

A Rhode Island native who graduated from Providence College and Columbia University, he often came

east to visit his parents at their Cape Cod home. He discovered Duxbury after one of his three sisters moved here with her family seven years ago. Farrelly moved to Duxbury four years later after "Dumb and Dumber" became a hit, and he could afford to live there and still work in Los Angeles and on location. His brother Bobby moved to Duxbury soon after.

"I just thought it was the most beautiful town I had ever seen," Peter Farrelly said.

Its family-friendly character makes it a good place to raise children, he said, noting that he and his wife Melinda plan to start a family eventually. For now, they share their Duxbury home with their two large, exotic dogs, a Bernese mountain dog and a Leonberger. If Duxbury had a health food store that met their needs and more restaurants that suited their tastes, he said, they would hardly have to leave home base.

Duxbury's distance from Hollywood types was another attraction.

In Los Angeles, it is hard to get away from the business. People recognize him there and do not hesitate to approach him, even at the grocery store. In Duxbury, Farrelly said he likes to blend in with townspeople who may or may not know who he is and what he does for a living.

"It's also a way to protect ourselves from losing touch with Joe Schmo," he said of living in New England. "Not that Duxbury is exactly roughing it."

The Farrelly brothers still hang out with high school friends from Cumberland, R.I.

Mark "Sharpy" Charpentier, a childhood friend who left his family's flooring business to work with the brothers, describes them as "extremely down to earth."

"They still have all the same friends," he said. "They still keep in touch with the same group of friends they had in school."

"Just to be around these guys, people with real jobs, I think it allows us to keep in touch" with real life, Peter Farrelly said. These friends, and members of the Farrelly clan, appear as extras in the Farrelly brothers' films.

"[Peter and Bobby] actually have to go to bat for these people to fight for them to get them in there," said Charpentier, who now works as associate producer on his friends' films. "The studio doesn't want to do that, they want to hire all [professional] extras."

Shortly after Peter Farrelly bought his house in Duxbury three years ago, he gave the previous owners and 62 other friends and relatives roles as extras in "Kingpin," a wacky 1996 bowling film that starred Bill Murray and Woody Harrelson.

Farrelly said he tries to work near his Duxbury home as much as possible. He estimates he spends nine to 10 months a year here. "I hope to have years where it's 12," he said.

Last spring during post-production for the Farrelly brothers' new romantic comedy, "There's Something About Mary," they rented a house on Wadsworth Road in Duxbury and transformed it into a high-tech editing suite. Most evenings the filmmakers and their editing crew hung out at the Winsor House or the Milepost, two popular local restaurants. Peter Farrelly said he also enjoys dining at Tosca in Hingham and at Arthur & Pat's in Marshfield, where he says he can get "the world's best fish and chips."

So far, Farrelly said he is encouraged by test screenings that indicate the new film is scoring well with women as well as with men. Their other films, with Three Stooges-like physical comedy, appealed more to males, he said.

"There is a buzz starting," Farrelly said of "There's Something About Mary." "It's testing through the roof."

The film stars Cameron Diaz, Ben Stiller, and Matt Dillon, and will have its July 14 premiere in Rhode Island, a Farrelly tradition. The movie opens nationwide the following day.

Another film, based on Peter Farrelly's first novel "Outside Providence," is scheduled to open next fall. Doubleday will re-publish the 1988 novel in October to coincide with the movie's release. The film stars Alec Baldwin and is directed by Michael Corrente ("Federal Hill," "American Buffalo"), who wrote the screenplay with Peter and Bobby Farrelly.

Time in New England may be at a premium for Farrelly in the next few years, now that he and his brother have signed a three-picture deal with 20th Century Fox. Work on the first film, "Stuck on You," begins next winter.

The comedy centers on Siamese twins who are Massachusetts high school hockey goalie champs. While some will find the concept offensive, Farrelly sees it differently.

"We don't set out to gross people out," he said. "We set out to write a movie to make people laugh. . . . It's being true to what cracks us up. And what we find funny is the unexpected."

The unexpected, such as living in Duxbury near family and friends, also helps keep his growing Hollywood success in perspective, he said.

"Making it in Hollywood doesn't change your life so much for the better," he said. "It's not a bad thing, but it doesn't save you, like a lot of people hope it will. It's just a nice promotion."

"The truth of the matter is, I was as happy starting out, living on lima bean and cheese sandwiches, as I am today," Farrelly said. "The lesson is, don't wait to be happy."